

VISUAL ARTS POLICY

Introductory Statement

Sandymount School believes that Visual Arts education plays a central role in the teaching, learning and lives of our students. Our student cohort access Visual Arts through a range of curriculum programs as they vary greatly in age and ability. We strive to ensure are students have enjoyable and purposeful experiences which enhance their learning, self-confidence and self-esteem.

When people enter our school the first thing they notice is our art displays. We believe having our students work around the school greatly increases their morale and creates a vibrant and happy artistic school environment.

Rationale

Visual arts activities enable the students to communicate in a unique way and to organise experiences, ideas and feelings in a visible and tangible way. Through drawing, painting, making, inventing etc, our students can assimilate, respond to and make sense of their experiences of the world. Continuity and progression are particularly important features for students with special educational needs.

Our Vision

All our art programs focus on the creative process and we ensure there is not an over emphasis on the end product. We place equal emphasis on *making art* and *looking at* and *responding to* art.

All of our art activities focus on the social, emotional and cultural development of our students. For many of them this area of the curriculum provides a range of sensory opportunities and we provide a wide variety of stimulating materials at both a visual and tactile level. The aesthetic experience for many of our students is rooted in sensory awareness and appreciation.

We endeavour to enable our students to have the greatest possible control of their work and to enable them to make choices about their materials and instruments. We strive to enable our students to develop ownership of their work and to foster a sense of pride in it and to encourage e them to seek to communicate about it. We want our students to gain a lifelong leisure interest in Art.

Our Aims

The aims of our visual arts curriculum are:

- To allow for waiting times for answers and responses.
- To ensure all students have equal access to display space.
- To ensure hand under hand support is provided where necessary.
- To have fun with a variety of materials.
- To use visual art as a non-verbal means of expression.
- To develop motor skills and concentration.
- To provide a wide variety of sensory experiences. (Touch, sound, smell, taste, movement)



- To promote cross-curricular links and provide opportunities to refine skills being taught.
- To help students to develop sensitivity to the visual, spatial, tactile world and to help provide for aesthetic experience.
- To help students to express ideas, feelings and experiences in a visual and tactile form.
- To enable students to have enjoyable and purposeful experiences of different art media and to have opportunities to explore, experiment, imagine, design, invent and communicate with different art materials.
- To enable students to develop the skills and techniques necessary for expression, inventiveness and individuality.
- To enable students to experience the excitement and fulfilment of creativity and the achievement of potential through art activities.
- To foster sensitivity towards and enjoyment and appreciation of the visual arts.
- To provide opportunities for the student's to explore how the work of artists and craftspeople might relate the his/her own world
- To place emphasis on the process rather than on the end product.
- To promote the students understanding of, and personal response to, the creative processes involved in making two and three-dimensional art.

Curriculum

As our students are aged 4-18, with various levels of learning abilities and due to their medical and complex needs, we offer a range of art programs.

1. Junior Certificate Program in Art- Level 1 and Level 2
2. Primary School Curriculum.
3. NCCA Programs for students with General Learning Disabilities (GLD) - mild, moderate and severe. (CATs)
4. PMLD- Northern Ireland thematic units of work. Sandymount School places huge importance on thematic learning and art is a huge part of the life and culture of the school.

The Visual Arts Curriculum comprises of two parts:

- Concepts and Skills Development
- Strands and Strand Units

Concepts and skills development:

- An Awareness of line
- An Awareness of shape
- An Awareness of form
- An Awareness of colour and tone
- An Awareness of texture
- An Awareness of pattern and rhythm
- An Awareness of space

These concepts and skills are derived from the visual elements and will be developed as work is completed on the strands and strand units.



1. Strands and Strand Units

Visual Arts has six strands and two strand units at each class level, which are as follows:

Strand	Strand Units
Drawing	Making drawings Looking and Responding
Paint and Colour	Painting Looking and Responding
Print	Making Prints Looking and Responding
Clay	Developing form in clay Looking and Responding
Construction	Making Constructions Looking and Responding
Fabric and Fibre	Creating in Fabric and Fibre Looking and Responding

Teachers are familiar with the structures of the curriculum, and pay close attention to the Guidelines for General Learning Disabilities to inform planning and practice.

Other media, such as photography, film and video or computer graphics and apps are included in our art programs.

2. Approaches and Methodologies

We support the recommendation that Guided Discovery is the most appropriate teaching method for the Visual Arts (as per the NCCA guidelines for teachers of students with Mild, Moderate and Severe and Profound general learning disabilities) as it encourages the pupils to:

- Explore the expressive potential of various media and experiment with them.
- Cultivate their own artistic interpretation of their world.
- Observe their visual environment.
- Express significant aspects of their lives in visual form and to appraise art works.

The teacher's awareness and acceptance of a broad range of visual imagery, both in children's work and in the work of artists is also important. Emphasis will be placed on process rather than product. The uniqueness of each pupil's art work or their response to the work of other artists will be encouraged and celebrated. Visual arts activities should be structured to show sequence and growth in complexity and should build on earlier experiences and skills acquired. A balance must be met between making and doing and looking and responding Pupils will be exposed to a wide range of materials and techniques. As with all subjects in a multi class setting, the teacher should be aware of what is appropriate for each pupil in each strand and strand unit, for their class level. They should also be aware of each pupil's individual ability within the area of visual arts and having all this knowledge, they should group pupils for each lesson accordingly.



As such:

- Students experience and imagination
- Materials and tools
- Working from observation and curiosity
- Work of artists and craftspeople
- Talk and discussion
- Active learning and doing
- Collaborative learning, team teaching.
- Looking and responding – giving ample time
- Examination of art elements – line, shape, form, colour and tone, texture, pattern, rhythm and space
- Reference to other arts areas e.g. music and drama
- Use of the environment
- Direct teaching approach
- Guided discovery approach
- Whole class work
- Individual work
- Group work
- Project work
- Talk and discussion
- Active learning
- Problem solving
- Skills through content
- Drawing
- Paint and colour
- Print/Clay
- Construction
- Fabric and fibre
- Looking and responding
- Use of ICT

Looking and Responding

Children should have opportunities to question and reflect on what they see and to become more discriminating and critically aware. The emphasis, however, should be on appreciation and enjoyment. Children will be given ample opportunity to experience a wide variety and range of art images both representational and non-representational. They will be encouraged to look and talk about his/her work, other children's work and artist's work with openness and sensitivity and will understand there are no definitive answers in art. Emphasis will be placed on discussion of qualities rather than judgement.

3. Linkage and Integration

Teachers must plan for opportunities for linkage and integration of Visual Arts activities. Teachers are encouraged to integrate Visual Arts with other subjects in a way that compliments curriculum aims and objectives in the subjects. Integration is encouraged, where is natural and where children's learning can be maximised. Well planned, integrated topics provide a variety of contexts for developing concepts and skills and are added opportunities for creativity and inventiveness. A



thematic approach may be taken for linking strands as visual arts lends itself very well to other curricular subjects.

Some examples could include:

- History- Aztecs, Vikings, Ancient Egypt.
- Communication- stories, poetry, advertisements.
- Music- responding to music, constructing musical instruments.
- Geography- map drawing, sketching of local area.
- Science- diagrams, plant and animal life.
- Maths – data, 2/3 D shapes, symmetry, area.
- Learn together- reflecting on meditation, celebration of festivals, designing campaign posters for elections.
- Drama- designing and making costumes, set design.
- P.E.-orienteeing.

4. Assessment and Record Keeping

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. In Sandymount School, we consider assessment in Arts Education important as it helps to identify learning potential and also areas of difficulty. It further enables the teacher to rate the effectiveness of the teaching programme and to choose appropriate teaching strategies. One of the main assessment tools used in our school for Arts Education will be teacher observation. The teacher may also digitally photograph any class art projects or art work and these may be displayed in the corridors or on the school website.

The following assessment tools will be used by the teachers in the school:

Teacher Observation (formal and informal) - Emphasis will be placed on observation and assessment of the child's engagement in the art process rather than the product. Teacher will observe, question and monitor children during the art process. Areas for assessment might include:

- The child's ability to choose and use materials, tools and media for a particular task or project, effectively and with originality.
- The child's expressive use of visual media in compositions and in developing form.
- The quality of the child's responses to art works, and his/her ability to make connections between his/her own work of others.
- The child's approach to and level of involvement with a task.
- The child's contribution to group activities.
- Circle Time, where Looking and Responding can take place, perhaps with using photographs.

Teacher Designed Tasks - Tasks will be designed to facilitate children's creative thinking, problem solving and skills development.

Work Samples - Any of the following may be used as a form of assessment and record of the child's work.

- Class portfolios, examples of the year's work from different children.
- Individual display books (A4) or scrapbooks, containing art pieces from each year and given to pupils at the end of the school year Digital photographic record of children's selected work.



- Samples of the children's art work are also sent home with each child. The information gathered will be shared with parents at parent/teacher meetings and in report cards at the end of the school year.
- Display, where looking at the Art of others can take place
- Student feedback/level of enjoyment and participation
- Parent feedback
- Achievement of IEP goals

5. Equality of Participation & Access

All students have equal access to all visual arts activities. Due to the complexity and range of physical disabilities our student's present with, hand under hand assistance may be required in order to participate in the practical aspects of visual art activities. Each teacher adapts the visual art activities in order for each individual to participate.

Many of our students need specialised equipment also to help them gain access to the visual arts curriculum. This includes eye-pointing, eye gazes, big macks, communication boards, 1-1 assistance, dyson mats, tilt tables etc., that allow students to make choices and communicate their preferences. Staff are aware of every student's likes and dislikes or anxieties. Some students don't like paint for example or different tactile experiences.

6. ICT and Assistive Technology (AT)

In many cases, the use of ICT and assistive technology by our students is their only means of communication and interaction with many of the schools' activities, therefore all art activities might need to be adapted in order for our students to be able to access them and give them every chance of succeeding. Art activities will need to be made switch/ eye gaze accessible and might need to have text to speech enable. Note it's not necessary to have high tech assistive technology present all the time, many activities can be done using hand under hand, eye pointing, yes and no answers, etc.

Organisation

1. Timetables

The time allocated to art during the school day is dependent on the curriculum plan being followed, junior cycle or primary for example. Teachers work collaboratively for art and provide group learning opportunities. Art is often connected to themes of the term, seasons, colours of the month and so forth.

2. Displays

Our school celebrates our student's art and is evident and prominent in every corner and area of our building. It encourages interest and students to ask questions. It encourages the investigations of different Art materials and also validates our student's work and gives them a sense of pride. Displays of student's work provide both teachers and students with unique opportunities to look at and talk about their own art. Each class has access to display areas both inside their rooms and in communal areas. They love showing off their work and we love showing their work to others in the school community.



3. Resources

- A wide variety of art materials are provided in a dedicated art room in the school: crayons, markers, paper, paints, glitter, paintbrushes, sponges, clay, marbling ink, stencils, stamps, combs, lollipop sticks, matchsticks, string, candles, cotton wool. Types of paper: Tissue, newsprint, crepe, sugar paper, wallpaper, card, various sized paper plates.
- A collection of fabric and fibre: Hessian, wool, cotton, silk, polyester as well as seasonal decorations is available. Teacher requests are always accommodated and supported.
- Art materials are sourced from Star school supplies, euro and bargain stores.
- The use of clean recycled materials is encouraged and the school avails of an account with ReCreate.
- Library: We have a good selection of Art Books, to give ideas and tips available in the school for all teachers to use. A list of books, online resources and interactive activities is displayed in the resource section of the library
- A copy of The Flo Longhorn Sensory Art Book:
S:/Masters/Resources%20Sensory/Flo%20Longhorn%20Books/Flo%20Longhorn%20Sensory_Art_2019.pdf

4. Health and Safety

Non -toxic materials are used and edible paint and sensory items are often used also. Cutting materials are suitable for our students use. Our students are closely supervised and monitored at all times. .

5. Individual Teacher’s Planning and Reporting

All teachers will be given a copy of this whole school plan and will be encouraged to refer to it when doing their long term and short term planning. The teacher’s weekly plan also acts as Cúntas Miosúil, which are kept in the office. This acts as a good indicator and record of work carried out in relation to visual arts. Teachers are asked to pay particular attention to adequate timetabling, the use of thematic teaching and also to ensure that all strands and strand units are adequately covered each year, as recommended.

Recommended reading:

https://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/Resources/Cirricular_Material/P_Mild_Arts.pdf

https://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/Resources/Cirricular_Material/P_Sev_VisArts.pdf

https://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/Resources/Cirricular_Material/P_Mod_VisualArts.pdf

https://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/Resources/Cirricular_Material/PP_Art.pdf

Example planning with strands, strand units and objectives:

Strand	Strand Unit	Objectives
Drawing	Making Drawings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiment with the marks that can be made with different drawing instruments on a range of surfaces • Make drawings based on vividly recalled feelings, real and imaginative experiences and stories • Discover and draw line and shape as seen in natural and manufactured



Construction	Making constructions Looking and responding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make imaginative structures • Look at, investigate and talk about spatial arrangements and balance in collections of objects and in photographs of natural and built structures • Look at and talk about structures that are easily accessible and close at hand, at visually stimulating structures and at a range of common artefacts • Look at and talk about his/her work and the work of other children
Fabric and fibre	Creating in fabric and fibre Looking and responding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the possibilities of fabric and fibre as media for imaginative expression • Make simple collages • Invent a costume • Look at, handle and talk about a variety of fabrics and fibres for experience of tactile, visual and structural qualities • Look at and talk about his/her work and the work of other children

6. Staff Development

Staff development occurs through staff planning days, staff meetings, organised talks and sharing of ideas. Training during the last academic year included a workshop with Recreate, a team training day with our Creative Associate, and a Creative Confidence Workshop, as well as a peer shared training collaboration day.

The school were involved in a 2 year Creative Schools Program and also were successful in achieving a Blast residency program in the last academic year.

7. Parental Involvement

Parents are encouraged to come in and view displays of our student's work. Once an art piece is completed students are given a choice as to whether they would like to add it to their portfolio or to take it home to share with their parents. Parents are informed of group art projects and are encouraged to send in clean recycled materials for use in art activities.

8. Community Links

Opportunities are made to integrate members of the wider community into Visual Arts Education at Sandymount School. Community Links take place through various methods such as Local Art Competitions, displaying Art pieces in Public Libraries and visits to galleries and exhibitions and projects with Art institutions.

Examples of these links are the SomeOne Like Me national art project; the RTE Christmas student art competition, the Food Dudes art education resources and a cooperation project with the NCAD, where some of their students develop an art project with the school.



Success Criteria

The success of this policy is measured using the following criteria:

- Continuity of content and methodology will be evident in teacher's preparation and termly and fortnightly plans
- Ongoing assessment shows that students are developing a level of proficiency in art skills appropriate to their age level and ability
- Observation of enjoyment and engagement in art activities
- Colourful displays on classroom and school walls.

Review and Ratification

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management.

Signed:



Sé Goulding
Chairperson of Board of Management



Jennifer Doyle
Principal

Date: 17 April 2024

